

AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listing, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-7 (Cancelled)

8. (Original) A mowing machine comprising:

a frame;

an engine;

a cutting blade rotatably mounted to the frame via an electric blade clutch;

a controllable accessory power take off drive (PTO) electrically coupled with the electric blade clutch;

a PTO switch associated with the PTO and the electric blade clutch, the PTO switch having "ON" and "OFF" positions such that the PTO may energize the electric blade clutch when the PTO is in the "ON" position and electrical connection between the PTO and electric blade clutch exists;

a pair of cut-out switches electrically connected to the PTO and the electric blade clutch;

a transmission system governing the speed and rotational direction of corresponding right and left drive wheels;

a pair of transmission control levers operatively associated with the transmission system, each of the control levers being selectably movable into one of a forward, neutral or reverse gear position corresponding to a desired speed and direction of travel of the right or left drive wheels;

each of the cut-out switches being mounted to the mowing machine for selective contact or non-contact by a corresponding one of the control levers whereby the cut-out switches

electrically connect the PTO with the electric blade clutch and engage the cutting blades when either or both of the cut-out switches are in a first position and the PTO switch is "ON" and disconnect the PTO from the electric blade clutch and disengage the cutting blades when both of the cut-out switches are in a second position, and contact or non-contact positioning of the control levers with the switches determines whether the cut-out switches are in the first position or the second position, whereby the cutting blades may be automatically engaged by placing one of said cut-out switches in the first position after both of said switches have been in said second position.

9. (Original) The mowing machine of claim 8, wherein each cut-out switch further comprises:

- a mounting bracket;
- an electrical coupler;
- a leaf spring; and
- a plunger,

wherein each electrical coupler connects one of the cut-out switches with the PTO and the blade clutch, and each mounting bracket mounts one of the cut-out switches to the mowing machine, each cut-out switch being mounted such that biasing contact of each of the leaf springs by a corresponding one of the control levers depresses the plungers, thereby placing the cut-out switches into the second position, and non-biasing contact of each of the leaf springs by the corresponding control levers extends the plungers, thereby returning the cut-out switches to the first position.

10. (Original) The mowing machine of claim 9, wherein depression of a plunger occurs when a corresponding one of the control levers is placed into the reverse gear position.

11. (Original) The mowing machine of claim 9, wherein extension of a plunger occurs when a corresponding one of the control levers is placed into one of the neutral or forward gear positions.

12. (Original) The mowing machine of claim 9, wherein depression of a plunger occurs when a corresponding one of the control levers is placed into either of the neutral or reverse gear positions.

13. (Original) The mowing machine of claim 12, wherein positioning of either of the control levers in the forward gear position causes a corresponding cut-out switch plunger to extend, thereby placing the corresponding cut-out switch in its first position, re-connecting the PTO and the electric blade clutch, and re-engaging the cutting blades.

14. (Original) The mowing machine of claim 9, wherein each cut-out switch is arranged in parallel relative to one another and in series between the electric blade clutch and the PTO.

15. (Original) The mowing machine of claim 9, wherein a bottom portion of each control lever contacts a corresponding one of the leaf springs.

16. (Original) The mowing machine of claim 15, the bottom portion of each control lever further comprises:

- a plate;
- a sleeved bracket;
- a pivot weldment;
- a pivot shaft;
- a set of linkages,

wherein one side of each plate is mounted to the mowing machine and another side of each plate is mounted to the sleeved bracket, each pivot weldment is received in one of the sleeved brackets and is connected to one of the pivot shafts, each pivot shaft is connected to one set of linkages, each set of linkages being associated with a corresponding right drive transaxle or left drive transaxle, whereby one set of linkages determines the speed and rotational direction of a

right drive wheel and the other set of linkages determines the speed and rotational direction of a left drive wheel according to the gear positions of each control lever.

17. (Original) A method of automatically disengaging and re-engaging cutting blades of a mowing machine, the method comprising:

- providing a mowing machine having an engine, a transmission, at least one transmission control lever, a controllable accessory power take off drive (PTO) coupled to an electric blade clutch, a PTO switch having an "ON" and "OFF" position, a cutting blade engagable by the electric blade clutch, and at least one cut-out switch between the electric blade clutch and the PTO, each cut-out switch having a first position that connects the PTO with the electric blade clutch when the PTO switch is "ON" and at least one cut-out switch is in the first position, and a second position that disconnects the PTO from the electric blade clutch when all cut-out switches are in the second position;

- starting the engine;

- turning the PTO switch to an "ON" position;

- shifting at least one of the transmission control levers into a non reverse gear position to place at least one cut-out switch into the first position thereby connecting the PTO with the electric blade clutch and engaging the cutting blades;

- shifting all of the transmission control levers into the reverse gear position to place all of the cut-out switches into the second position thereby disconnecting the PTO switch from the electric blade clutch and disengaging the cutting blades; and

- shifting at least one of the transmission control levers into one of the non-reverse gear positions to place at least one of the cut-out switches into the first position thereby re-connecting the PTO with the electric blade clutch and re-engaging the cutting blades.

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18. (Original) The method of claim 17, wherein the mowing machine is a two-control lever ZTR mowing machine and the cut-out switches are in parallel relative to one another and in series between the PTO switch and the electric blade clutch.

Claims 19-23 (Cancelled)